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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 001598

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARP AMACDONALD AND OES/MSN

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SUBJECT: PORT SECURITY WOES MAKE GULF OF ADEN "OPEN SEA"
FOR PIRATES & SMUGGLERS

REF: SANAA 1484

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Classified By: Ambassador Stephen Seche for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. The Gulf of Aden is an "open sea" for pirates and smugglers, the Yemen Coast Guard (YCG), Aden Port Authority, and independent journalists told PolOffs on an August 8 visit to Aden. The YCG's deep water patrolling capabilities are almost non-existent and the Port Authority's ability to detect aberrations in vessels' cargo and movements is linked to inconsistent radar and voluntary inspection. Reliable vetting procedures and a shift from hardware-focused aid to training are necessary commitments for the ROYG's counter-piracy forces if they hope to fend off pirate attacks and re-establish Aden as a premier port city. END SUMMARY.

CORRUPTION FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT

12. (C) The Yemen Coast Guard (YCG) claims to have minimized smuggling in the small region stretching westward from Aden to Khawr 'Umayrah, but Colonel Lotf A.H. Baraty, the commander of the YCG in Aden, declared the area from Bab al-Mandeb to Mukha on the Red Sea "open sea and safe for smugglers and pirates." Part of the problem is that the YCG does not control the Mukha harbor; there are several other security forces there, meaning additional opportunities for corruption. Baraty alluded to some corruption within the YCG and attributed it to a lack of adequate vetting of fishermen's sons, soldiers from coastal areas, and unemployed men from the mountains when they were recruited into the force. "We don't know who among them were untrustworthy." Baraty indicated that he suspects pirate ships may be receiving tip-offs from sailors onboard YCG ships via satellite phone and from informants on shore regarding patrol routes. Furthermore, Ayman Nasser, editor of independent Aden-based newspaper al-Tariq, confirmed that the YCG has been threatened by powerful individuals within Yemen, warning them not to patrol certain areas of coastline lest their sailors be killed. In addition, Nasser said that ROYG military and tribal figures have been known to procure weapons illegally and are "the most likely suppliers to the pirates because their security clearances give them easy access to the ports." The resulting lack of security renders Yemen a perfect transit point for illicit arms and drugs (see septel), leaving security officials like Baraty with "no sense of how much is seeping through the open coast."

PORT SECURITY AND INTERDICTION CAPABILITIES

13. (C) Founded in 2002, and beginning operations as late as 2003, the young YCG falls short in accomplishing its daunting task of patrolling and securing Yemen's 1900 kilometers of coastline. Dividing its territory into three districts, the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Red Sea, Baraty indicated that the YCG has yet to establish a real presence in the Arabian Sea. At its inception, the YCG was forced to recruit men from mountain villages to supplement its ranks of sailors and officers wooed away from the Yemeni Navy (YNAV), resulting in a significant skills disparity within the YCG and between the YCG and the sea-savvy pirates. Furthermore, simmering resentment from the YNAV, whose ranks of talented and English-speaking officers were depleted by the YCG, remains an impediment to counter-piracy cooperation. The YCG's stubborn refusal to share its mandate to secure the coastlines with the YNAV was made evident in Baraty's classification of the YNAV as an "impediment" to port security, insisting on the YCG's "need to kick everybody out of Mukha" in order to secure the harbor. (Comment. This unsolicited comment from the commander of the YCG in Aden underscores the infighting that continues to undermine counter-piracy coordination in the Gulf of Aden. Instead of focusing on cooperation, the YCG expends more energy on ousting other ROYG security and naval forces from the mission field. See reftel for greater detail. End Comment.)

14. (C) The YCG's long patrolling missions have been reduced in number and randomized by budget cuts. Though they attempt to maintain a weekly long patrolling mission, the YCG has been forced to focus more on close harbor patrolling. Of the

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YCG's 30 vessels dedicated to Aden, only three are capable of sustained deep water patrolling. At \$2200/tank of gas, the high price of fuel combined with budget cuts have rendered even minimal patrolling difficult as the YCG often lacks the funds to fuel its ships. Mohamed A. Mubarak bin Aifan, the Chairman of the Aden Port Authority, pointed to the Auto Identification of Ships (AIS) system as the cornerstone of current interdiction capabilities. Based on satellite technology, the AIS can identify a ship more than 100 miles before it reaches Aden and then inform the authorities of a ship's cargo and direction. When questioned about its limitations, Aifan admitted that the AIS works only on ships which have complied with protocols to install and maintain a black-box type of tracking device onboard. The Maritime Affairs Authority (MAA) can detain a vessel not complying with AIS, but only if it stops at the port and permits inspection of the vessel. According to Aifan, AIS can serve as a "complement, but not a replacement" of the more advanced radar technology VTS which the YCG is attempting to establish. VTS radar is a far more reliable system currently used in the U.S. which can measure the electronic signature of a vessel and determine if the ship deviates from a pre-described course, thus enabling proactive interdiction of passing vessels.

PIRACY PUTS THE SQUEEZE ON PORT TRAFFIC

15. (C) Since the recent upswing in piracy in the last year, the Aden Port Authority has seen a 40 percent drop in containers, which represents more than half of port revenues.

Aifan suspects the drop would have been higher had it not been for the fact that in November 2008, Yemen entered into a joint venture to develop the port via international port management company Dubai Ports World. It was a good opportunity to develop the container business, but the problem of piracy let us down. The effect of piracy could have been more adverse if we hadn't had the agreement with Dubai, Aifan said. Unfortunately, Aden is still losing volume to nearby Djibouti and ships are migrating even

further afield to Cape Town. The drop in oil prices and the spike in insurance rates for ships transiting the Gulf of Aden have rendered the longer Cape Town route an attractive option. Oil tankers en route to Europe have been circumventing the Gulf of Aden, even if it means an extra two-to-three months of transit time.

COMMENT

¶16. (C) The YCG, YNAV, and other ROYG security forces engaged in counter-piracy must focus on elevating their standards of training so that all personnel are sufficiently equipped to engage the highly-adept pirates on the high seas. A short-sighted focus on securing new boats, aircraft, and other equipment without the proper maintenance and navigation know-how or spare parts has dominated YCG-donor country interaction. Furthermore, insistence on reliable vetting procedures and investigation of potential corruption within the ranks of the YCG, YNAV, and port police are essential first steps in establishing an effective, credible counter-piracy force. Should the ROYG fail to address these systemic problems within their counter-piracy forces, Aden will continue to lose port volume to neighboring hubs, further crippling the local economy and encouraging lucrative, illicit trade. END COMMENT.
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